

historic accomplishment. This Build Back Better agenda is part of a great American tradition: marshaling our Nation's resources and ingenuity to build a better future for our country.

This is the strategy that drove our victory in World War II or the Cold War and our dominance now in the Age of Information.

Years of gridlock left us at risk of falling behind. Our competitors on the global stage, like China, sense an opportunity. They look at the same statistics we view. And those statistics tell a sobering story.

For example, America used to lead the world in the best roads and bridges, but today, according to the World Economic Forum, we rank 13th.

How is that for a slogan?

Our Nation has also fallen behind when it comes to educational attainment. We rank 35th out of the 37 major countries when it comes to investing in early childhood information and care. Our economy is the most unequal it has ever been since the Gilded Age, leaving behind millions of American families who are struggling to pay their bills.

The Build Back Better agenda, inspired by Joe Biden's administration, is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to restore the American promise. It will create millions of jobs and ensure every family has a chance to live in dignity and protect our children's and grandchildren's future.

Sadly, like the American Rescue Plan, we still don't have a single Republican who will step up and join us. I hope that changes.

In my home State of Illinois, the Build Back Better package would be life-changing. It will fund high-quality childcare for more than 750,000 children.

I have told the story before of how—when my son Paul learned that his wife Tanja was going to have a baby, they called the grandparents right away. The next call was to a daycare center to enlist their little baby—they didn't know was a boy or girl—as early as possible in their neighborhood daycare center. That shows you the kind of demand there is in quality daycare.

We also need to make preschool a reality for more than 250,000 additional children in Illinois with this package. That is a million children combined, between childcare and preschool, that will finally be able to access high-quality care and education.

The Build Back Better package will also prevent hundreds of thousands of kids from going hungry. And it will give low-wage workers a tax cut of up to \$1,500 a year.

How is that for a change?

Four years ago, in the Trump administration, the Republican priority was a tax cut for the highest income Americans.

Our priority, the Democratic Biden priority, is a tax cut for working families and lower-income families to give them a fighting chance to make ends meet.

These are just a few of the provisions included in the Build Back Better package.

I might add something that is often mistaken. What I have just described to you is fully paid for. We pay for it by making certain that those who are making the highest incomes in America and the corporations that are the most profitable pay their fair share of taxes. This is policymaking at its best—fair and fiscally responsible.

Yet when our Republican colleagues hear how these investments will ease the burdens of working families, they seem to have one takeaway. It is the one thing we hear from them over and over: "Socialism!"

I mentioned that the Build Back Better agenda is part of the great American tradition. Well, that word "socialism" is part of the American tradition, too, on the Republican side, but one that hasn't stood the test of time.

Let's look back at history, at how many times the word "socialism" has been thrown around. During the Great Depression, President Franklin Roosevelt proposed Social Security to protect the elderly from financial ruin. In response, one Republican lawmaker declared Roosevelt "the first Communist President of the United States" and accused him of advancing a "Socialist platform."

Sound familiar?

Thirty years later, a similar debate played out over the creation of Medicare. The American Medical Association even recruited a future President, Ronald Reagan, to cut a television ad to record an album warning the public about the dangers of "socialized medicine."

Well, more than a century later, the vast majority of Americans are still covered by private health insurance. But Medicare is one of the most popular programs in America.

Can you imagine where American seniors and families would be today if we had listened to those socialist denunciations of Social Security and Medicare?

Here is one more example from the Great Depression: When joblessness in America reached 25 percent and Congress was considering the creation of America's first unemployment insurance system, a Congressman named Samuel Dickstein decried the idea of unemployment insurance as an "out-and-out communist program."

Now, you need to hear the rest of the story because, years after he made that declaration, it was discovered that Samuel Dickstein was a Soviet spy.

Time and again, the claim of socialism has been bandied about to oppose commonsense policies that help working families get by. Now, as then, these claims have no basis in reality. It is a smear tactic that is, once again, being used to frighten Americans and distort and derail a meaningful debate.

Let's get past the name-calling and get down to basics. Do you support yet another huge tax cut for massive cor-

porations? Or is it time—at long last—to support working families?

Our Republican colleagues answered that question when they were in charge. They took on nearly \$2 trillion of debt in America to cut taxes for corporations and the wealthy. It seems they are happy with that brand of socialism, so long as it benefits major corporations and those who are well-off.

Democrats believe in putting working families first, which is why the Build Back Better package includes the biggest tax cut—let me repeat that—it includes the biggest tax cut—for working and middle-class families in American history, and we believe in making smart investments in good-paying jobs.

We have an opportunity to do all of this by enacting President Biden's Build Back Better agenda. Let's continue this great tradition and fight off the charges that we are somehow lapsing into socialism.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

TRIBUTE TO DEREK COATS

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, there are lots of things we disagree on here on the Senate floor, but one thing we all agree on is the importance of getting the right people to help us do these jobs.

I rise today to honor one of my outstanding staff members, Derek Coats.

Derek has recently been awarded the Great Griffon Award by his alma mater, Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph, MO. The Great Griffon Award is given to those Missouri Western alumni who have made outstanding contributions to the workforce, to society, or to Missouri Western. Derek has done all three.

After graduating from Missouri Western in 2002, with a bachelor's degree in political science, Derek began his service to Missouri in the U.S. Senate, in the office of my predecessor, Senator Bond. He served on Senator Bond's staff through 2010 in a variety of different jobs, rising to the role of district office director.

When I came to the Senate in 2011, I asked Derek to join my team. Since then, he has served as my State director and deputy chief of staff, overseeing day-to-day operations across five statewide offices.

Derek regularly spends his days traveling the State, meeting with Missourians and hearing their issues and concerns. The information he shares with me from those visits ensures our work in Washington aligns with the critical needs and priorities of our State. To provide just one of many examples, this information assisted in my efforts to work with others to restore year-round Pell grants to community colleges and all colleges and universities in our State. That, of course, included Derek's alma mater, Missouri Western.

Derek's knowledge and experience are an incredible asset to me and to

our entire team. The work he has done in the Senate has touched the lives of so many Missourians, and our State is all the better because of it. Missourians and I have benefited from having Derek on our team, and I am glad he is being recognized for his hard work. He has so much to be proud of, as does his wife Kellie Ann and his son Carter.

It is certainly my pleasure to join Missouri Western State University in honoring Derek Coats for his service to the State of Missouri and, frankly, for his service to the entire country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, in watching from the sidelines and since we are not directly involved and because the Democrats decided to go it alone, our Democratic colleagues appear to be playing a game of whack-a-mole to keep their reckless tax-and-spending spree from falling apart.

After months and months of intraparty negotiating—again, talking among themselves, not to us—they hit the gas pedal last week when they knew that President Biden was going to the U.N. Climate Summit in Glasgow, Scotland, and they wanted to give him something that he could actually deliver on.

So, last Friday, they finally settled on a framework, but the cracks quickly began to show. We don't even have a pricetag on this proposal, but some have estimated its cost at \$1.75 trillion—an absolutely staggering amount of money. The truth is no one knows because the bill hasn't even been finalized yet, much less scored by congressional scorekeepers.

Unsurprisingly, yesterday, one of our colleagues, the Senator from West Virginia, expressed some of his skepticism about the proposal; and I imagine more are in the wings, wringing their hands in private. After all, this bill spends trillions of dollars on radical priorities that are out of step with where most Americans are: expanded healthcare subsidies; handouts for labor unions; government-funded childcare; and an all-out attack on American-made, affordable energy.

On Friday, the President touted the \$555 billion that this agreement would put forward to support clean energy efforts, but these, upon further inspection, are mainly subsidies—taxpayer subsidies—for corporations and the well-off.

I am reminded of France's yellow jacket protests a few years ago. In 2018, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets in Paris to protest a hike in gas taxes. At the time, President Macron said the increase was critical to pushing the French people to buy cleaner vehicles, but for most hard-working families, pricey electric vehicles simply were not and are not an option. The yellow jackets felt disenfranchised by the urban elite, saying leaders were talking about the end of

the world while they were worried about the end of the month.

It sounds pretty familiar. Here in the United States, families are being pounded by inflation. Prices are going up on everything from groceries to home appliances. Gas prices alone have gone up 60 percent from just 1 year ago, and families are doing their best to prepare for an expensive winter. Energy bills are expected to soar by as much as 54 percent.

Despite the serious financial strain that families are feeling, our Democratic colleagues are pushing policies that will drive up those costs even more.

But here is the real kicker: Often under these proposed policies, the wealthiest of Americans will stand to benefit the most on the backs of hard-working American families.

One of the most clear-cut examples is the aggressive push toward subsidizing electric vehicles, which are among the most expensive cars on the market. Now, with 280 million cars on the road, only 2 percent of which are electric vehicles, this will not benefit most hard-working American families. It will benefit those who can afford these expensive vehicles, and the cherry on top is the up to \$12,500 taxpayer subsidy that will help those wealthy Americans buy these expensive vehicles that are out of reach for most hard-working families.

It doesn't matter if the vehicle is completely or substantially made in China, for example, or if the buyer makes hundreds of thousands of dollars a year—they are still eligible for the tax credit. The most generous benefit is reserved for vehicles built in—you guessed it—union shops. We know the labor unions are among some of the biggest supporters of our friends on the other side of the aisle, and they are set to receive their reward. Buyers could receive up to a \$12,500 tax credit for purchasing an electric vehicle from a union shop.

I have nothing against union shops. I support people who choose to be part of a labor union, but this idea that taxpayers should have to underwrite a benefit that goes exclusively to one part of the electric car business, to me, is offensive, and it is just unjustified.

I haven't seen any evidence either that union-made electric vehicles are somehow more green than their non-union-made competitors', but those companies are certain to gain financial benefits because of these generous taxpayer-funded handouts. Wealthy Americans and Big Labor win; hard-working American families not so much.

Then there is a long list of government handouts to make homes more energy efficient. Similar to those electric vehicles, the high cost of retrofitting a home makes it infeasible for most families—certainly, the middle-class families. Outfitting a home with solar panels will cost you well over \$10,000; and, of course, the bigger the house, the more the cost.

The Biden administration is, once again, happy to let taxpayers subsidize

these expenditures. The Democrats' proposals include billions of dollars in rebates and grants to help cover the cost of retrofitting homes, even for the well-to-do, who will be the ones who will primarily be able to afford, even with these subsidies, this sort of retrofit.

At the end of the day, the family with the means to spend thousands of dollars on these products will spend less on their monthly electricity bill, which I assume is the point, but everybody else will pay more in taxes without having the benefit of a lower electricity bill. If our colleagues on the other side of the aisle get their way, monthly electricity prices are likely to increase for everyone else.

As I mentioned, gas prices are up significantly from last year. If you filled up your pickup truck a year ago, today you will find out that you will spend about \$33 more for each tank of gas that you pump. And energy prices for homes this winter are expected to go up as much as 54 percent.

These are incredible numbers. This is what happens when you throw so much money at limited goods and services—prices go up; inflation goes up. It is a silent tax on people who must pay for these goods and services and have nowhere else to turn.

With this as a backdrop, our Democratic colleagues have proposed to raise taxes on energy companies and drive those prices even higher. Now, only in a fantasy world can you impose greater costs through tax increases on a business and not have them transferred directly to the consumers who buy these goods and services. They are going to be passed along to the people who pay for these goods and services.

This bill will include a new methane tax, which would require oil and gas producers to pay hefty fees if they emit more methane than the government allows.

Natural gas accounts for 40 percent of our electricity—double the amount as renewable sources. Hitting those companies with a methane fee and other proposed tax hikes isn't going to change the fact that we need natural gas to keep the lights on.

By the way, we need natural gas in order to produce the electricity that you use to charge your electric vehicle.

As we hope to move to cleaner forms of energy—obviously, coal being the one that most of us believe emits the most emissions—moving to natural gas just makes sense, and as a matter of fact, the United States has reduced our emissions, not by banning access to any particular energy source but by producing more natural gas.

If we need an example of what a natural gas shortage in America would look like, just take a look at Europe. The supply shortage has caused electricity prices in Europe to skyrocket, plus the fact that they have banned the use of coal and even nuclear power, which is emissions-free. But after the Fukushima nuclear meltdown and the